

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5013

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 9003

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PFOR, RP, ME

SUBJECT: PHILIPPINE PREPARATIONS FOR ISLAMIC FOREIGN MINISTERS'
CONFERENCE

REF: (A) MANILA 8937 (B) MANILA 7860 (C) MANILA A-74

SUMMARY: MANILA PRESS HAS PUBLISHED TEXT OF "AGENDA"
PROPOSED BY MORO NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT (MNLF) WHICH IS
SUPPOSED TO SERVE AS BASIS FOR RESUMPTION OF GOP-MNLF TALKS
THAT FAILED LAST JANUARY. ACCORDING GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED
PRESS, GOP IS WITHHOLDING "OFFICIAL POSITION" ON NEW MNLF
PROPOSALS UNTIL THEY ARE JUDGED BY MUSLIM FILIPINOS
THEMSELVES (FEW OF WHOM, GOP INSITS, ARE REPRESENTED BY
MNLF). ALTHOUGH "AGENDA" APPEARS TO REPRESENT MARGINAL
SOFTENING OF PREVIOUSLY RIGID MNLF STAND, PRESS COVER-
AGE PICTURES IT AS MERELY ANOTHER UNREASONABLE DEMAND FOR
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SECESSION. IT LIKELY THAT GOP WILL ARRANGE TO HAVE LATEST

MNLF PROPOSAL REJECTED AT STAGED "PEACE TALKS" NOW UNDERWAY IN ZAMBOANGA. RESULTS WILL THEN BE BROUGHT TO ATTENTION OF ISLAMIC FOREIGN MINISTERS AS EVIDENCE THAT FILIPINO MUSLIMS HAVE ONCE AGAIN REJECTED BOTH SECESSION AND THE MACHINATIONS OF THE FOREIGN-CONTROLLED "MISUARI FACTION" OF THE MNLF. END SUMMARY.

1. MANILA PRESS OF JULY 1 PUBLISHED TEXT OF MNLF "AGENDA" FOR RESUMPTION OF NEGOTIATIONS (FIRST ROUND OF WHICH FAILED IN JANUARY) CONVEYED BY ISLAMIC SEC GEN AL TOHAMY. ACCORDING COVERAGE BY GOVERNMENT NEWS AGENCY (PNA), GOP IS WITHHOLDING OFFICIAL COMMENT ON AGENDA UNTIL IT CAN DETERMINE OPINION OF "MUSLIM LEADERS AND THEIR FOLLOWERS." PRESUMABLY AT "PEACE TALKS" WHICH RESUMED IN ZAMBOANGA YESTERDAY (REF A). HOWEVER, PAN COVERAGE (WHICH IS CERTAINLY DICTATED BY GOP IF NOT "OFFICIAL") REFERS IN PEJORATIVE TERMS TO "SO-CALLED AGENDA" AND "UNDISGUISED DEMANDS OF MNLF" IN WAY WHICH LEAVES NO DOUBT WHERE GOP SENTIMENTS LIE. ACCORDING PNA, GOP ALSO REPEATED ITS STANDING INVITATION TO AL TOHAMY TO ATTEND ZAMBOANGA "PEACE TALKS."

2. CONTENT OF NEW MNLF AGENDA DIFFERS FROM MNLF PROPOSALS IN JIDDA TALKS LAST JANUARY IN WAYS WHICH SUGGEST SOME SOFTENING OF MNLF POSITION. ALTHOUGH WORDING OF TEXT IS CONSISTENTLY VAGUE, AGENDA APPEARS TO BE DEMANDING "SELF-GOVERNMENT" FOR SELECTED AREAS OF MINDANAO, BASILAN, SULU AND PALAWAN (E.G., MUSLIM-OCCUPIED AREAS AND ANCESTRAL LANDS) RATHER THAN FOR TOTAL AREA. AGENDA PROPOSES TO GIVE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT SOME SUPERVISORY ROLE IN "NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS," CALLS FOR SUPREME COURT WITH HALF MEMBERSHIP TO BE APPOINTED BY MANILA, ADMITS VAGUE RESPONSIBILITY TO REMIT SOME TAX REVENUES TO CENTRAL GOVERNMENT, AND IN GENERAL WOULD SEEM TO SUGGEST THAT MISUARI ET AL ARE BACKING AWAY SLIGHTLY FROM RIGIDITY OF PREVIOUS MNLF STAND. (TEXT OF "AGENDA" WILL BE POUCHED DEPT WITH FURTHER ANALYSIS.) HOWEVER, PNA STROY DOES NOT ACKNOWLEDGE ANY SOFTENING IN MNLF POSITION AND SAYS AGENDA "SEEKS THE CREATION OF A SEPARATE MUSLIM STATE OUT OF THE TERRITORIES OF MINDANAO, BASILAN, SULU AND PALAWAN."

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3. COMMENT: PRESUMABLY GOVERNMENT WILL PRESENT MNLF AGENDA AT ZAMBOANGA IN A WAY WHICH WILL INSURE ITS DENUNCIATION BY SO-CALLED REBELS WHO ARE CURRENTLY ASSEMBLED THERE. GOP WILL THEN BRING RESULTS TO ATTENTION OF ISLAMIC CONFERENCE IN JIDDA AND CLAIM THAT IT REPRESENTS TRUE FILIPINO MUSLIM OPINION WHICH REJECTS THE MACHINATIONS OF MISUARI AND HIS FOREIGN-FINANCED CLIQUE.

PURNELL

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